



THE SAVVY CONSUMER COLUMN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 10, 2008

CONTACT: Kelly Brockman
or Shannon Ashford
(615) 741-6007

Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs Offers Tips for Pool & Spa Safety This Summer Season

Nashville, TN - -The Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs warns consumers to make pool and spa safety a priority this summer. With the weather getting warmer, more people will be heading to swimming pools to stay cool and have fun. Even while enjoying leisure time, however, it is important to make safety a top priority.

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children ages 1-4. The average number of drowning deaths involving children younger than age five in pools and spas has increased to a yearly average of 283 (for 2003-2005), according to a recent report from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. The report also shows that the majority of deaths and injuries occur in residential settings and involved children ages 1-2.

Between 1999 and 2007 there were 74 reported incidents involving entrapment, resulting in nine deaths and 63 injuries. Six of the deaths occurred in pools and three occurred in spas. All of the deaths, except for one, involved children 14 or younger. These entrapment incidents involve being trapped by the force of suction at the drain and can occur because of a broken or missing outlet cover.

A new federal pool and spa safety law was signed by the President on December 19, 2007. The Virginia Graeme Baker pool and Spa Safety Act requires that by December 19, 2008, all public pools and spas have safety drain covers, and in certain circumstances, an anti-entrapment system. The goal of the law is to improve the safety of all pools and spas by increasing the use of layers of protection and promoting uninterrupted supervision to prevent child drowning and entrapments.

As Tennessee's State Designee for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Division of Consumer Affairs offers these tips to help prevent drowning deaths:

- Never leave children unattended in a pool or spa.
- Inspect pools and spas for missing or broken drain covers.

- Don't allow children in a pool or spa with missing or broken covers. Inserting an arm or leg into the opening can result in powerful suction and total body submersion or drowning.
- Don't leave toys or items in pools or spas that may attract young children and cause them to fall in the water when they reach for them.
- Remove ladders from above-ground or inflatable pools when not in use. This will help prevent access to the water.
- Always check the pool or spa first when searching for a missing child. Every second counts and precious time is often wasted looking elsewhere.
- Keep rescue equipment and a phone near the pool.
- Have an emergency plan in place and learn CPR.

To report a dangerous product or file a consumer complaint, please contact the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-342-8385 or online at www.tennessee.gov/consumer.

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